

Appl. No. 09/833,847
Response Dated February 23, 2003
Reply to Office Action of 11/21/03

Claim Amendments

This listing of Claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for covering a payload of a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:
 - (a) a suspended track;
 - (b) a hoist, slidably engaged to said track, said hoist having a retractable line, said retractable line being maneuverable in multiple directions;
 - (c) a spreader bar attachable to said retractable line, said bar having means for attaching to a covering;
 - (d) means to move said hoist; and
 - (e) a rod positioned at a height greater than the height of the payload, which wherein the rod is supported independently of the vehicle.
2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said rod is attached to a support for the track.
3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said rod is rotatable.
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:
 - (a) a support structure, said structure comprising a base and a vertically extending side frame rigidly attached thereto; and
 - (b) rigid arms extending in perpendicular fashion from generally the same height of said side frame, said track spanning between said arms.
5. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein said rod is attached to said support structure.
6. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 4, wherein said track is suspended a sufficient distance away from said side frame such that the track is suspended generally over an expected vertical centerline of a payload positioned beneath.

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7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4, wherein said arms are extended from said support structure at a sufficient height to overhang variable sized payloads positioned beneath.
8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4, wherein said base is mounted on wheels.
9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said means to move said hoist comprises an electronically operable remote controlled system.
10. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said means to move said hoist comprises:
 - (a) a guide extending laterally from said hoist; and
 - (b) a wire connected at one end to said hoist, running along said guide, and connected at the second end to an electronically operable remote controlled system.
11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said means for attaching to a covering comprises spring loaded locking mechanisms.
12. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said means for attaching to a covering comprises a plurality of snap shackles.
13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 4 further comprising:
 - (a) means for a person to be secured to said apparatus to protect against falling from ~~a payload~~ the payload being covered by said apparatus.
14. (Previously Presented) Apparatus of claim 13 wherein said means for a person to be secured comprise:
 - (a) a tether line suspended from said support structure in generally parallel fashion to said track; and
 - (b) a safety cable slidably engaged at one end to said tether line.

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15. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for covering payloads, said apparatus comprising

(a) a movable hoist slidably suspended over a payload, said hoist having a retractable line that is maneuverable in multiple directions and that can be connected to a covering to be spread over the payload; and

(b) a rod positioned below said hoist and above an expected height of said payload, ~~over which rod~~ wherein at least a portion of the covering may pass over the rod.

16. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 15 further comprising:

(a) a spreader bar that connects to said covering and to said retractable line; and

(b) a means to support the trailing portion of said covering as it the covering is pulled over a ~~payload~~ the payload by said hoist.

17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the rod is free-standing.

18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the rod is vertically positioned between a highest point on the vehicle and a lowest point on the track.

19. (Previously Presented) A method of covering a payload of a vehicle, comprising:

- a. attaching the covering to a hoist;
- b. raising a leading edge of the covering to a height higher than a rod, ~~which rod~~ that is higher than a highest point on the vehicle;
- c. moving the leading edge over and beyond the rod in the direction of the payload, whereby the covering passes at least partially over the rod;
- d. lowering the leading edge; and
- e. detaching the leading edge.